

ROSICRUCIAN ORDER

AMORC

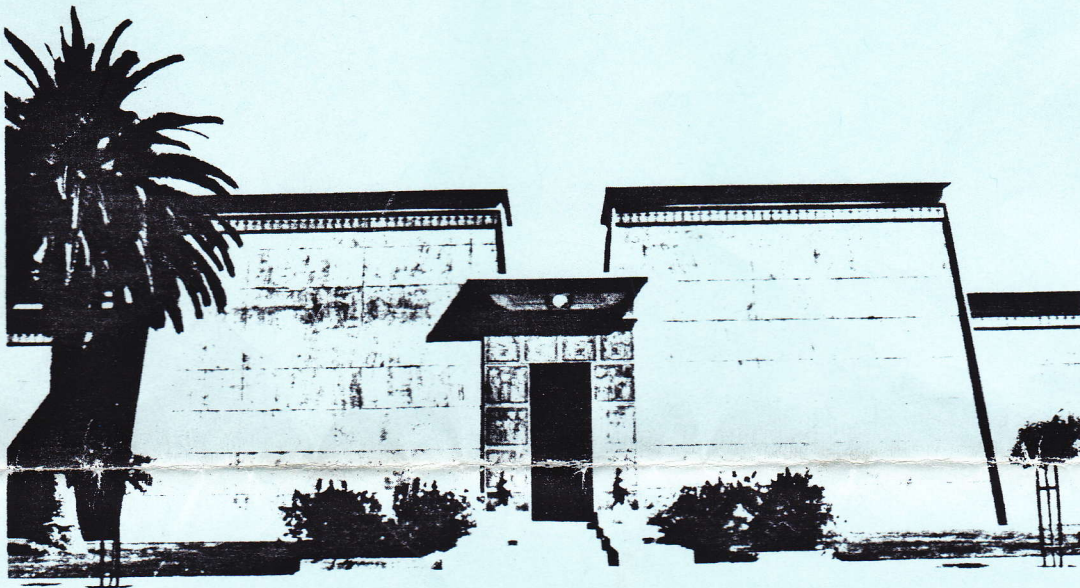
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Supplementary Monograph

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ROSICRUCIAN PARK, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

"Consecrated to truth and dedicated to every Rosicrucian"

SPECIAL SUBJECT

GREAT WHITE BROTHERHOOD

LECTURE NUMBER

RAD-3

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THE GREAT WHITE BROTHERHOOD

All the sources of the wisdom which mankind cherishes and preserves are not known. Some still remain a challenging and intriguing mystery. The threads of much of our knowledge are lost in the obscurity of antiquity. We can rightly presume that it is time alone which conceals their beginnings from us. It is, however, more than strange that paralleling general events of the past, the causes of most of which are clearly indicated, are also certain "sudden appearances" of a new wisdom, that is, an elaborately developed system of thinking, and even sciences. Why, for example, are kings of thousands of years ago, their dynasties, their rise and fall in power, often precisely chronicled, and a transcendental wisdom of the same era seems to have a spontaneous, unheralded, unexplained origin?

Men, as history relates, have been often so endowed cosmically with inner vision and encyclopedic minds that they as individuals have become virtual fountains of wisdom from which virgin ideas flow. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, Plato, and Aristotle are but a few of these geniuses of antiquity. The world is content to accept them as the authors of that which they expounded, since in comparatively modern times there have been others who as individuals have also greatly advanced learning by their singular efforts and intelligence. Such revelations may be explained physiologically by saying that the individuals had a peculiar configuration of the cortical areas of their brains, a special grouping of their brain neurons. Mystically, on the other hand, they may be heralded as recipients of an intuitive knowledge; that is, they were channels through which the consciousness of God flowed to mingle with their mortal minds. Nevertheless, revelation or intuition does not explain the mysterious initial appearance of a great wisdom had by a people.

Wisdom may be said to be an applied knowledge, a knowledge which has been refined by usage amounting to a skill. Wisdom, therefore, is not revealed but is developed over a period of time from concepts which, in their simple form, may have originally flashed into the consciousness of man. There are numerous examples of such wisdom appearing like bright stars on the horizon of those civilizations which history records. However, such learning did not drop from heaven. Men somewhere at some time by the sweat of their brows unearthed it in human experience no matter how sudden its apparent appearance. It may have taken centuries or even ages to develop it to the degree of perfection it had when it first came to the attention of the masses of men. During such an interim, it was either secreted from most men, or else it was lost through some cataclysmic upheaval, to be rediscovered and disclosed in its perfected whole. Obviously, profane or general history knows not the source of such wisdom, or it would be factually related.

To cite a specific example, the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, generally conceded to have been erected during the reign of Pharaoh Cheops about

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2900 B.C., is not alone a stupendous edifice but a monument as well to a tremendous learning possessed by its builders. It is, we may say, a symposium of numerous arts and sciences. It reveals in its engineering and its precise measurements a masterful knowledge of mathematics and of physics. Further, the location, or rather its orientation in relation to the land surface of the earth, shows a knowledge of the geography of the earth far beyond the borders of Egypt. Since it is also contended with merit that the apex of the pyramid was used for astronomical observation, this then is one more application of the wisdom its great mass represents.

Any school boy knows that the Egyptians were renowned in antiquity for their learning, but what is not often realized is that less than a century and a half before the Great Pyramid of Gizeh was begun many of the arts and sciences used in its construction, and which it symbolizes, were unknown. There are no evidences that 150 years before that time the Egyptians had any knowledge of masonry which permitted them to quarry the hard stone, such as that of which the Great Pyramid was constructed, nor are there any evidences of the variety of tools and instruments needed for such construction. Further, the precise exactitude exhibited in the measurements of the Great Pyramid is not to be found in any other structures previously erected. Certainly, if higher mathematics was known previously to the extent that it was commonly used in the construction of the Great Pyramid, it would have been employed in other enterprises.

It is not explanatory to state that such knowledge could have been conceived within the period of a century and a half preceding the Great Pyramid, because we have been able to accomplish seeming miracles in a like time during our period. All that we have and are doing today is founded upon those basic principles or points of knowledge that have come down to us. Certainly we will admit that it is easier to evolve the use of fractions in arithmetic from the simple addition and multiplication than it is or must have been to conceive and develop arithmetic from the very beginning. It is far easier, for further example, to be able to expand into a beautiful literature from a simple vocabulary than to begin to relate human ideas to vocal sounds for the first time. It was, therefore, impossible for the Egyptians to have conceived and developed the knowledge and wisdom employed in the building of the Great Pyramid in 150 years.

Such wisdom must have spread to Egypt at that time from some remote land, or was released in Egypt in that period by whoever was preserving it from a distant past. If it came from some other area of the world, any achievements there which were the result of it must have been destroyed, or remnants of such a great culture would be known to us today, and it would far antedate Egyptian civilization. That such wisdom may have survived the complete destruction by nature of a civilization and a land in which it prevailed, has been a persistent legend for centuries, with increasing possibilities of its becoming fact in the near future. Not only did Plato in his dialogues refer to a land beyond the "Pillars of Hercules" that sank beneath the sea, and

of which Solon was said to have been informed by Egyptian priests, but the ancient Egyptians themselves in their writings make reference to such a strange land. In a hieroglyphic inscription that has come to light is a tale thousands of years old relating how an ancient mariner, upon becoming lost at sea, finally came upon a remote land far to the east and in a great sea. Upon it were a strange people possessing great wealth and marvelous achievements.

However, wherever such great wisdom may have originated, it is certain that those who knew it and were accustomed to it would make every sacrifice to preserve it. Men may be diverse in character and in many things of which they and their lives are composed, but there is usually something, some influence or interest, that will bind them into groups. Love of such wisdom, and the desire to preserve it, would be a bond. Moreover, they would revel in expounding it. They would thus be inclined to exclude themselves from the profane, disinterested world, and build themselves an environment conducive to their great love, and there work in an atmosphere of culture.

Such a place for such a society or brotherhood of men has often been an ideal as well as a fact in history. Sir Francis Bacon in his book the New Atlantis refers to the Solomon's House in Bensalem on a remote island where thinkers congregated in secrecy to dedicate themselves to the search for truth and the furtherance of knowledge. In the Fama Fraternitatis, great historical manifesto of the Rosicrucians, the allegorical legend relates that Christian Rosenkreuz and his associates erected a Domus Sancti Spiritus (House of the Holy Spirit) in which they could elaborate on and prepare for dissemination the knowledge which they had acquired in their journey eastward. Consequently, it is not just presumption to say that this wisdom reached Egypt in some enigmatic way and was cloistered by a brotherhood to be used when it could give the greatest impetus to mankind.

The Hebrews have such a tradition, and in fact, actual literary works which they profess is of that secret wisdom. These are known as the kabala. Kabala is a Hebrew word meaning tradition. There still are a great many among the Hebrews who maintain that beside the written, the Bible, or the spoken law, the Talmud and Midrash, the Hebrews also possessed an equally divine and secret teaching of great antiquity. Such teaching must never be written down or spoken except to those initiated. It is declared by them that the Lord told Moses, "These things shalt thou disclose, and these shalt thou hide." The Kabala, therefore, is to them the voice of the secret wisdom. It may strain the credulity of some to believe that God imparted such wisdom direct from Moses, but that the ancient Hebrews were a repository for such a secret wisdom is not to be disputed, and the true Kabala is excellent evidence.

The Kabala during the middle ages was perverted into a gibberish of symbols and words purporting to give man some magical control of nature, the power to perform miracles, in fact. Even today much of what is issued as the Kabala is of that nature. However, the main

doctrines of the true Kabala attempt to explain the relation of God to his world. It may be said emphatically that the authentic Kabala is a work of philosophy trying to explain the origin of things. The oldest book of the Kabala is the Sepher Yezirah or Book of Creation. It is said that its author, that is, its compiler really, was Abraham. There is no reason to doubt this, since so many of the Hebrew legends that have persisted have eventually been corroborated by archeological discoveries.

The kabalistic Book of Concealed Mystery opens with the statement that it is "the book of the equilibrium of balance." Philosophically this means that the work seeks to reconcile the contraries, to harmonize the differences between the various conditions in nature or within man, thereby producing harmony. Equilibrium or balance is, after all, a ~~mitigating of imposing stresses or strains, and in balance is found~~ perfect living and understanding. There is also reason to believe that this secret wisdom of the Hebrews emanated from the same source as that possessed by the Egyptians. However, the Hebrews emphasized certain aspects of it to those whom they initiated in their brotherhood.

One of the most mystical groups which was thoroughly conversant with the concealed mysteries was the Essenes. Each member of the Essenes was also one of the great brotherhood whose consciousness was a repository for the ancient wisdom. The Essenes had their own system of degrees with mystical initiations for each, and there was a dress and symbolism peculiar to each degree which indicated the attainment of the member.

One of the degrees composing what was really a sect within the Essenes was known as the Therapeuti. The members were especially trained in the art of healing, in the care of the sick, and in the prevention of disease. In other words, these sages specialized in the application of that portion of the secret wisdom which concerned the curing of disease and the maintenance of health. To Rosicrucians it is of special interest that the Essenes had an inner shrine in their homes --a sanctum--for meditation. Pliny, referring to the Essenes, said their usages are different from all other peoples and nations.

Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, in his book The Mystical Life of Jesus, which gives a fascinating and lengthy account of the Essenes, relates that these perpetuators of the secret wisdom first assumed their name Essenes at Alexandria, Egypt. He points out that the word Essene is derived from the Egyptian word Kashai, which means secret. He also states that there is a Hebrew word Chsahi which is similar in sound, the meaning of which is secret and silent. He recounts how the Essenes, after receiving their initiation and passing through certain rites of enlightenment, were attired in white, signifying their attainment and illumination. So common did this practice become that they were often referred to as "The Brethren in White."

Thebes, the ancient capital of Egypt, had at one time been the Sacred Ark, namely, the repository for the mysteries. Since it was no

longer such a repository, this brotherhood in white sought to find a new ark to preserve the wisdom and to further it. This was a trust and an obligation they must fulfill toward whoever had imparted their wisdom to them.

The main body of the White Brotherhood left an indelible mark upon human society as they moved like a torch of light across the face of continents. The disciples they made and left in their wake in turn became the nucleus of other esoteric, mystical, and philosophical societies. They are well established in history and several of them are in existence today. Finally this main body of mystics entered the mountain fastness of Tibet, which they decided should become the new ark for the concealed mysteries of which they were the custodians.

As the centuries passed, the Great White Brotherhood membership became dispersed throughout the Tibetan monasteries. By no means must this be interpreted that the members of the Great White Brotherhood became Buddhists exclusively. As members of the Brotherhood, they met at various places in great assemblages to perform their own ancient mystical rites and to have their own masters and teachers orate to them upon the mysteries. They had nothing to do with the Buddhist orders, nor did they possess a great temple secluded away, an idea which appeals to the imagination.

It is necessary to reiterate today that the Great White Brotherhood does not allude to race. The reference to white is not in connection with racial color. From remote times, white has been symbolic of purity, perfection, and spirituality. Cleanliness and perfection are easily associated with white because such is, to the eye, without blemish. Psychologically this physical cleanliness and purity was transferred to spiritual values and to morals and character. Eventually white birds (as the dove), white flags, clothing, buildings, and religious accoutrements were employed to symbolize purity of mind and spiritual perfection.

Herodotus, ancient Greek historian, relates that the priests of ancient Egypt were robed in white. The Essenes of old, according to historical and mystical accounts, also were attired in white. In India most of the Brahman sages wear white and in Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet, and the Himalayas generally, the prayer flags adjoining lamaseries or sacred precincts are white.

Thomas Stanley in his history of Greek philosophy describes the clothing of the students of Pythagoras at Crotona as being of white material. Many other modern religious sects as well use white for similar significance in their ritualistic attire or ornamentation. The Islamic Sufis wear white. The Great White Brotherhood, therefore, alludes to the spiritual ideals and activities of this body and not to their clothing, and most certainly not to their race.

The Brotherhood was not pledged to an ascetic existence. It was not a selfish but a selfless body. It did not wish to escape the

realities of the world permanently but rather to prepare its members under ideal conditions to cope with the world when they would return to it after study and meditation in a community established for this purpose.

They were truly a brotherhood. They were bound in principle by the common end of the study of cosmic and natural laws and the furtherance of human enlightenment. They pledged themselves in initiation and by solemn oath to give themselves to study and worship of the Divine and its phenomena.

The knowledge acquired through mystical illumination and from such research as would today be called empirical or scientific inquiry was to be passed on to humanity. It was not to be hoarded as a forbidden wisdom for the exclusive advantage of a few. It was a firm resolve that emissaries, high initiates, masters of knowledge gleaned from nature, were to return to the world with that wisdom in the future. They were to become founders of mystical societies or to associate with orders having a true and noble purpose so as to guide and instruct them. This was done. Tradition records that some of the exalted Rosicrucian mystics and teachers were students of these masters of the Great White Brotherhood.

With the passing of time and the firm establishment of initiatic mystical orders of renown throughout the world, as the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC), the Great White Brotherhood as a select school finally dissolved. It no longer functioned as a secret retreat for those who were students of life's mysteries. Its members either established mystical orders in the world, or they contributed their experience and wisdom to existing mystical bodies. Today the Great White Brotherhood is an association of mystical orders and brotherhoods which have an authenticated historical and initiatic background.

No individual can affiliate directly with the Great White Brotherhood and receive personal instruction from it. He must become an initiated member of one of its member-orders. In recent years there have been fraudulent groups or charlatans advertising themselves as the Great White Brotherhood inviting anyone to receive instruction directly from it. There is no such body by that name today having any authentic historical descent from the ancient Great White Brotherhood. Numerous novels contain glamorous tales about secluded monasteries in Tibet where the Great White Brotherhood functions as a strange body. These tales are misleading and the authors know it. Their descriptions of the customs of the country and even of the terrain indicate that the writers have never even visited the area.

Like the masters of the Great White Brotherhood who finally went back into the world to serve it, it is also our duty to serve society. This is a time for advancement and not for retreat from the world and its problems. It is not sufficient for one just to hie away to a mountain top and give his entire time over to study. The study must be

applied as well. Our sacrifice is not to endure freezing mountain blasts nor to wrap ourselves in coarse clothing but rather to practice self-discipline so that we may faithfully apply ourselves to the light which has been entrusted to us.

The Divine Hierarchy is a group of Cosmic Masters or directors who aid in evolving the personalities of the souls on the earth plane. This Hierarchy or Holy Assembly reside on the Cosmic Plane. They once were mortals such as we, and their personalities were evolved as we are now evolving ours.

Through incarnation after incarnation on earth, they lived, learned, and strived as we do. In each incarnation they had a mission to fulfill also. After transition, when their souls were drawn into the great Universal Soul, their personalities were impressed by the Great Divine Intelligence with the significance of their earthly experiences and what would be expected of them in the next incarnation. Their personalities gradually evolved and were perfected until eventually they had that same degree of perfection as the Universal Soul itself, of which their souls were a part.

Eventually came the Great Illumination when the personality embraced with complete understanding and observance the universal wisdom of the great Cosmic or Divine Soul. No longer was it necessary for the soul and its personality to incarnate in physical form again. From that time on it resided in the Cosmic realm, and it was assigned the more noble tasks of inspiring other men on earth, of giving other souls who were incarnated the incentive to heed the wisdom of the Cosmic Soul, with which theirs was imbued, and to follow their example--the example of the Cosmic Masters.

There are approximately 144 such great souls constituting the Holy Assembly. They are the guides and teachers of the still evolving personalities, and they do not become incarnated again in physical form except as the Cosmic may decree.

There are a number of Masters according to the Rosicrucian Manual. "Under their care a certain group of high Initiates are prepared in each incarnation for still higher work in a next incarnation, and some of these are assigned the duty, the service and the real labor, of maintaining the positions of Imperators, Magi, and Hierophants in the several branches of the Great White Brotherhood organizations, of which the Rosicrucian Order is the highest. These Imperators, Magi, and Hierophants in various lands, together with the Masters, compose the Holy Assembly of the Great White Lodge.

"The Great White Brotherhood, on the other hand, is the school or Fraternity, of the Great White Lodge, and into this invisible brotherhood of visible members every true student on the Path prepares for admission. The Great White Brotherhood has no visible meeting place.

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Its members never physically assemble. Any physical organization, therefore, claiming to be the Great White Brotherhood is false.

"The Great Goal of the Great White Brotherhood is ever before the vision of all sincere Rosicrucians. The sublime joy of Cosmic Consciousness, Divine Illumination, can be known only through experience; and those who have made the contact have written in hundreds of books in the past ages such alluring descriptions as were calculated to tempt the seeker on the Path to be patient and persistent in journey toward that Goal.

"You will realize, of course, that the Great White Brotherhood and the Great White Lodge have no visible organization. They never come together in one united session; their members are never assembled in any one meeting; they have no Temple known by their names; and they have no earthly rituals, physical organization laws, or material form as a Brotherhood or Lodge. That is why it is often said, in mystical writings, that the 'real Rosicrucian Brotherhood is an invisible organization.' The Rosicrucian ORDER is truly visible, but the Great Brotherhood back of it is not visible as a body."

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